

PHILOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

[Professor W. Stede, Ph. D. (Leipzig), is a savant—a Pali scholar, a fine linguist, a clear thinker. He once wrote, “I believe in never letting a thought pass without wrestling with it as Jacob wrestled with God, until He blessed him, i.e., became part of his inner self.” Our author is a loved teacher at the School of Oriental Studies in London, and of his profession he says, “I like teaching, but I am not a teacher of the ‘regulation’ kind.” Dr. Stede is well known because of his scholarship, but among his friends he is better known for his fearless views and spiritual ideals. Readers of THE ARYAN PATH will find all his contributions possessing a dynamic quality such as was evinced of old by Martin Luther, an ancestor of his on his mother’s side.

In this thought-provoking contribution the reader will find some basic ideas so necessary for clear deductions essential in noble living. The closing paragraphs will start him, if he so wishes, on the fascinating journey to the land of symbols. The Ancients were taught by the sages in symbols—images, emblems, pictures. Hieroglyphics, ideographs, logograms represent the basic language in which universal truths are infallibly expressed. The language of the Spirit-Soul loses its efficacy when lips try to articulate even its alphabet. Only the purified human mind, as our learned author implies, can perceive the meaning and significance of those Images which tell the truth about man and the universe.—Eds.]

When I was told about the project of this new magazine I was delighted and wished it every success. I was requested to state my views on the problem implied in the above heading, and as one interested in this problem I consented. I am putting forth my remarks as merely programmatic, stating the problem, its limitations and its bearing upon our endeavour to reconcile (a sad word!) East and West.

There is only one way in which a mutual understanding can be brought about : by the realization of our weaknesses, or of our common helplessness when awake to the stupendous tragedies of nature. To these belongs language, which although generally praised as a blessing, constitutes one of the gravest tragedies of the human race.

Language is a great hindrance to peaceful progress. It is often a means of deception, of hiding one’s true feelings. But the full weight of this obstacle can only be realized by the deeper consideration of the relation between language and national pride and so-called patriotism. It is the difference in language which gives rise to estrangement between nations, and to the stupid idea that one nation is better than the other—an idea based on the ignorance of each other’s language. Language is the evil genius of patriotism, and the worst of it is that we cannot do away with the natural differentiation of languages. Esperanto, or a world-language, is a phantom. It may be useful as a business language, but it can never replace a natural one, because life and development of language (a wrong expression : for language has no life of its own ⁽¹⁾) and I should say :

(1) We do not quite see the point of our learned author. Our Arhat Esoteric Philosophy teaches that “languages have their cyclic evolution, their childhood, purity, growth, fall into matter, admixture with other languages, maturity, decay and finally death” (*Secret Doctrine II*, 199).—Eds.